

SIXTIETH REPORT

OF THE

Ministry - at - Large

IN LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

FROM JANUARY, 1905, TO
DECEMBER, 1905, INCLUSIVE





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MINISTRY - AT - LARGE

IN LOWELL, MASS.

From January, 1905, to December, 1905, Inclusive

LOWELL, MASS.
BUTTERFIELD PRINTING COMPANY
1906

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TO THE CITIZENS OF LOWELL :

The Ministry-at-Large has had as its purpose, and as its performance, for the past sixty years the doing of anything and everything that may be necessary for the temporary relief of distressed families of small-wage earners of the city, without regard to religion, nationality or color. It does a three-fold service of relief, education and religion. Its purpose is *preventive*. It directs paupers and vagrants to the municipal authorities, and gives itself to the keeping of self-respecting, small wage-workers from falling into pauperism and vagrancy. Charles Booth and many other economists agree that our "modern system of industry will not work without some unemployed margin, some reserve of labor." If this "unemployed margin or reserve of labor" is essential to our modern system of production, then the poverty of this class, and also of the unskilled class, should be relieved by means that will keep it out of pauperism and vagrancy. For if a family once falls into pauperism or vagrancy it is almost impossible to reclaim it again into the class of small-wage earners, or of unskilled labor. The pauper or vagrant is not dissatisfied with his lot of idleness and dissolute living ; compared with the privations and discomforts and worries that formerly tormented him as a small-wage earner, the brutishness and insensibility of pauper or vagrant have become to him the preferable state. And children bred in the ways of pauperism nearly always take up the vices of their parents. They are effortless beings, who make no fight for themselves and wait in misery till some one comes to assist them. This insensibility and effortless brutishness is not applicable to those small-wage earners whom this Ministry-at-Large aids and serves. They keep busily at work and try to conceal their poverty and privations. When sickness, slack work or other misfortune overtakes them, they come to us for relief. They hate charitable relief, and apply for it only as their last resort.

Leaving out of this report consideration of such important individual and social forces as heredity and environment, there yet remains to consider obstacles that may be too great for even the strongest of men to overcome, obstacles that beset the small-wage earner's common lot : long hours of work, low pay, severe competition, irregular employment, insanitary tenements, rents relatively the highest, highest prices for food and fuel because they must

buy in small quantities, ruinous rates of interest when they find it necessary to go into debt, frequent illness, highest death rate, and, being without savings, are in actual distress as soon as they are ill or unemployed. Their children, too, are involved in it: when insufficient and poor food will not feed the brain, and they are unable to learn in school; when they cannot discern the causes of their father's failure and misery, and eagerly leave school to "get to earning," thereby mortgaging *their* future as skilled workmen.

This explanation of the small-wage earner's condition does not imply other than that in Lowell his welfare is carefully considered. Lowell is regarded as one of the best cities of the world for him to live in. Among the agencies here that specially consider his needs are the well-ordered courses of the evening primary, grammar, high schools, the drawing, manual and textile schools, the public library. To these agencies devised for his advantage we daily direct his attention.

The past year has been favorable to the working people of Lowell, as the mills have been running full time and other lines of business have been good. Yet in the population of a manufacturing city like Lowell, composed largely of small-wage earners, there are even in good times people who need the assistance of the Ministry-at-Large, to help them to a job, or to a better paying one, or with advice in their affairs, or to the necessities of life and health.

The Ministry-at-Large has during the year given relief in these ways to the following number of persons according to nationalities.

Americans	478
English	452
Scotch	491
Irish	487
British Canadian	286
French Canadian	248
Swedes	33
Other Nationalities	82

2557

According to church preferences:

Protestants	1739
Roman Catholics	791
Greek Catholics	27

This relief was in groceries, coal, wood, shoes, clothing, meat, milk, money, meals, lodgings, board, rent, railroad fares, advice, work, inquiry letters, lawyers' services, doctors' services, medicines, surgical appliances, maternity aid, hospital treatment and institutional care.

The endorsement of an applicant for relief by minister, priest, teacher or overseer is guarantee of their worthiness till our own investigation is made.

The Minister-at-Large serves the State Board of Charity as Lowell probation visitor of the intemperates released from the State Farm at Bridgewater on indeterminate sentences.

He also serves the State Hospital at Foxboro in like capacity. He also serves other charitable institutions outside of Lowell in answering their letters of inquiry and investigating for them.

The services of well-known lawyers and doctors are given on request, and without cost, to persons coming to the Ministry-at-Large for such advice and service.

The Ministry-at-Large offices are used by the "Country Week" committee during July and August, in sending needy families into the country for a week or two of rest and change.

The Boston and Northern Electric Railway Co. gave us 500 free-ride tickets for the benefit of needy women and children during July and August.

The third Massachusetts State Conference of Charities was held in Boston in November, and in it was extensively discussed the present crusade, organized four years ago, to exterminate consumption, which is now regarded as especially prevalent among the poor. It has been observed in the cities of this country and abroad that the death rate from consumption increases with the increase of poverty. An eminent medical specialist gives it as self-evident that this disease is a sort of yard stick by which one can measure social misery. An excessive death rate from consumption is invariably associated with poverty and the evils incident to poverty. The Lowell doctors have the disease here under close observation. The trained nurse we are to put to work among the poor under medical guidance will be very helpful in the present crusade against this "poor man's plague."

The State Board of Health is to issue monthly bulletins in regard to the enforcement of the laws for the protection of the public health. This bulletin will contain a list of those articles of food, canned goods and the like, that have been found to be adulterated, or otherwise made up in violation of the law. This will benefit the poorer people, as they freely buy these goods. We have been asked by the Massachusetts Civic League to have these bulletins posted in conspicuous places.

In connection with our Free Church and Sunday School we have a young people's social union that meets Wednesday nights for music, singing, games and dramatics. The men's class in history and political economy meets Monday night. The text book used is Prof. Alfred Marshall's "Economics."

Christmas eve a festival was given to the children of our Sunday School. They and their parents and friends filled the church to its limit. Forty-four boys and girls gave entertainment, together with the spirited singing of the carols and the lighting of the tree. Young men distributed the presents which the management and teachers and other friends had provided. Many strange children were present, for this occasion only, from hapless homes, hoping to share the Christmas cheer, and they did share it.

Our church and Sunday School services cost the attendants nothing but their time and attention. We have good congregations at both services. There is no doctrinal preaching or teaching here. The import of both is the Ten Commandments, the Psalms, the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer and the sayings of Jesus. There is no enrolled membership, and the attendants are free to go and come of their own will. The attendance of men and boys exceeds slightly that of women and girls. The end to which we strive in church and school, and to which we in a measure attain, is to make men and women fit for the social life in which the teachings of Jesus are realized: that the secret of happiness is character, not possessions; that the happy life may be poor and humble in externals, may have many restrictions and privations, but its good will and self-restraint, its service and sacrifice for others, insures to itself growing self-control and increasing faculty, ordered homes and happy children.

Society today is split up into groups that are unacquainted with each other. From this condition spring suspicion, envy, passion, haughtiness, irresponsibility and recklessness. This condition is because the social and economic teachings of 100 years ago (of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and David Ricardo) still prejudice our social and economic thinking to believe that we are inherently selfish, that human aims and efforts are resolvable into selfishness. The giving last year, in the United States of 100 million dollars to philanthropy and education (not to count the free gift of time and service of countless busy men and women) disproves such belief. The average man, when in proper surroundings, is controlled by his affections and good will. Among the poor the chief virtues are: the support of the family as a unit by all of its members, kindness and generosity. And we not infrequently witness the living out in trying circumstances of that strong faith of religion — that man not only should, but does, love his neighbor as himself ; that he will surrender his life for his friend.

GEORGE C. WRIGHT.

Minister at Large

LOWELL, December 31, 1905.

FORM OF BEQUEST

I give, devise and bequeath unto the MINISTRY-AT-LARGE
in Lowell, Massachusetts, the sum ofDollars.



